

Santa Rosa County
Emergency Services Advisory Committee
October 26, 2005
2:00 p.m.

Minutes

Members present:

Stephen Cozart
Don Vanderryt
Werner Panchenko
Sheryl Bracewell

John E. Reble
Joe Diamond
James Chalmers

Members absent:

T. Simmons

Staff present:

Deb Grinde

Agenda approved as submitted for this meeting.

Minutes for meeting held on September 28, 2005 approved as submitted.

Persons to Appear

Presentation by Kevin Stanhope, Program Director Baptist LifeFlight

Baptist LifeFlight is the third oldest hospital based air medical transport agency in the country. It is the first in the Southeast area of the country and has been serving the Pensacola area since 1977. They currently have one helicopter based in Pensacola and one based in Mobile, Alabama. They enjoy being part of the community and serving Santa Rosa County.

This past fiscal year indicates that they transported just over 1,800 patients from approximately 3,900 requests for transport. Records for 2004 indicate that they transported 312 patients from Santa Rosa County and only 21 times (or 7%) were they unable to do so due to any unforeseen circumstances. e.g. maintenance problems, etc. They have a 12 minute response time to Santa Rosa approximately 80% of the time with the longest response time being seventeen (17) minutes.

The time frames following Hurricanes Ivan and Katrina presented a challenge to LifeFlight. The average number of patients per day went from five (5) to about seventeen (17). They found it necessary to bring in a third helicopter in order to meet the needs of the community. It is evident that this service is a valuable asset to the communities during the storm season. Discussion followed regarding LifeFlight's requirements to service Santa Rosa County including the fire departments for landing zone, lack of personnel available to set up landing-zones (because it may be a work day), etc. The pilots are able to determine whether they can land or not. Mr. Stanhope advised that it is to the patient's advantage for them to at least be circling the area and then turned away in the event that their services are not necessary. At this point they have a 35% cancellation rate for such instances.

Reports and Statistics

The statistics for the month of September 2005 were reviewed by committee members. Special attention was given to the area of "No Response" calls. It was noted that both Allentown and Bagdad VFD do not respond to greater than 30% of their calls. Determine that it is only occurring in two (2) districts rather than across the board.

Review of Correspondence

A letter has been sent to the Board of County Commissioners requesting that no funding be made available to those MSBU funded departments that have not submitted budgets in a timely manner based on decision of this committee.

An email was sent to H. Walker, County Administrator, regarding the fact that this committee did deny a request from Midway Fire Department for funding the purchase of LIFEPAK 12 emergency equipment.

Old Business

Inmate Work Crews

Chief Reble has not received any information that indicated a response was received from H. Walker.

No Response Rates – Selected Fire Depts.

Pace VFD has determined that they will no longer respond to medical calls with a priority level less than Delta. J. Chalmers advised that this will ultimately become a problem for patients when there is a lack of a functional two tier response system in the outlying areas. The first tier is the members of the community and their responses are important to a two tier system in order to eliminate delayed treatment. J. Chalmers pointed out that the first person on scene provides a psychological first aid to the patient. Rural Metro is unable to support a single tier system as the costs would be prohibitive.

Chief Reble state that overall the no responses have decreased quite a bit to less than 5%. However, two of the districts are over 30%. It is noted that, now that the departments are not responding to lower priority calls, the calls that are being missed are life threatening e.g. Delta. Currently the statistics indicate that there are a significant number of Delta calls that are not being responded to. Chief Reble talked about the many things the county has provided the departments in order to improve the responses, e.g. radios, pagers, AED equipment, etc. We cannot continue to pour money toward the issues and expect that to solve the problem.

S. Bracewell advised that the funds from the stipend program were reallocated to the training program. Funds that were not used by the end of the budget year were used for some enhancement in the EOC. The budget was decreased for this year and allocated for a number of other agencies. However, the funds are still able to be utilized for FFI training.

The Departments continue to provide a roster of which firefighters are scheduled for testing. However, the results of those tests are not being brought forward for documentation. It is imperative that information regarding those that have successfully completed the tests be retained for the state. There is an upcoming state test to be held November 6, 2005 in Milton.

MSBU Funding

This committee is in receipt of all budgets with the exception of East Milton.

Discussion held regarding the review of the fire departments' budgets and the methods of reporting same. Chief Reble believes that additional details are in order on several items that are purchased by the departments. He also indicated that any capital items must require a detailed explanation for the purchase to be made.

J. Diamond stated that during the Firefighters Association meeting several departments would like a new format to submit their budget to the county. They are willing to meet with representatives of the county in order to accomplish this. J. Diamond explained some of this committee's concerns at the meeting and explained that maybe they should take it upon themselves to explain that they are pouring funds into a piece of equipment that is extremely old and should expend the funds to purchase a new piece of equipment.

They also expressed concern that they are not made aware of how much money they have to spend during an upcoming budget year; consequently they complete a budget with no direction. J. Diamond advised them that they must present realistic expectations in a more detailed manner in order to receive proper and/or additional funding from the county. He reiterated that they must justify their needs. Only documenting equipment with a particular dollar figure is not sufficient explanation.

Chief Reble suggested that this committee determine what types of instructions are provided along with the budget forms. It is necessary to provide the departments with the correct tools to complete the project. He also questions what guidelines are used to dispose of equipment that should be accounted for.

The following suggestions were made during the course of the discussion that may improve the process:

- That the county may have to provide an employee to do the purchasing and authorize payment for the departments. It was noted that this would only have to occur for some of the departments as others are doing well.
- That the county provides a definition of a capital item and that those items are broken out of the budget.
- It may be that the fire departments be provided some assistance by the county to accomplish all of these things, e.g. re-financing equipment, etc.
- The county may need to purchase equipment for each of the fire departments and charge them for the purchases, as the county and/or a municipality may incur lower interest rates and purchase prices than the departments would.
- The county should consider hiring a mechanic to maintain all of the departments' vehicles.

D. Vanderryt stated that the budget format is minimal and that it should be expanded to include more information. He also believes that the county should not involve itself in the administration of the VFD as he believes that the volunteers will lose their pride and that, in turn, will affect their performances, etc.

Chief Reble stressed that the need for accountability remains. He stated that an item that costs one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00) or greater would indicate a capital item for budget purposes. These numbers would also indicate a need for inventory controls; what happens to an item that is disposed of or sold?

It was agreed that the Lease/Purchase category should indicate which item is being purchased or what lease the payment is being applied to; it should include the interest rate and the payment number and a total number of payments. It was also agreed that maintenance invoices should indicate what vehicle or piece of equipment it covered. A breakdown of the different types of insurances would be advantageous such as property, vehicle, liability, W/C, building, etc.

Chief Reble will draft a listing of budget preparation recommendations.

New Business

Audits

This committee reviewed a summary of audits prepared by Chief Reble for each departmental audit. Each MSBU department was included in the review. It seems that no documentation is a major part of the problem. In addition, these issues go no further than merely documenting what the problems are. The audits indicate that both Pace VFD and Skyline VFD are managing their funds extremely well. East Milton VFD audit was reviewed briefly as it was just submitted.

Chief Reble will draft a letter to the BOCC which will include the Summary of Audits of MSBU Fire Departments 2003 – 2004 for informational purposes.

Also determined that it may just be a matter of poor recordkeeping!

Water Purveyors

Need to determine when the next meeting should be held.

Meeting Schedule

Motion made and carried to cancel the November and December meetings due to the holidays.

No Response Calls

S. Cozart suggested that it may be helpful to have a representative from each fire department whose No Response percentage rate is extremely high. It may be possible that we could help them with assistance. Determined that those departments have attended and we discussed different methods to help including recruiting volunteers, having a recruitment drive, etc.

J. Diamond stated that Avalon VFD drive has been successful. He mentioned that the Firefighters Association is planning to purchase a moving sign to take from one department to another. They will advertise meeting time and date for any new volunteers.

Public Comments and Questions

Richard Collins, 8600 Chumuckla Hwy, Pace, FL

Suggests that either this committee, Mr. Walker or S. Bracewell request copies of the VFD meeting minutes in order to get a better idea of what is occurring at each department.

Mr. Collins would like a copy of each department's budget.

Suggest that the budget section labeled Lease/Purchases include the length of time the payment schedule is for and/or when the payoff date is.

Consider having the county find out what the total payout is for all departments; incorporate into the county budget, have the county pay them off. Deductions could then be taken from the department's annual budgets. The county would hold the title and loan the vehicles/apparatus to the departments.

Questioned when the budgets are due to the county. S. Bracewell advised that it is approximately the first week of May but will advise.

Advised this committee that the Clerk of Court does have Harold VFD audit data, but that the auditor has not completed at this time.

Mr. Collins would like a copy of the Summary of Audits.

Stated that many people have no access to the internet and are unable to learn when the meetings are held. Mr. Collins applauds Avalon VFD for advertising their meetings for all to see. He stated that as a resident of the Allentown fire district he has never seen any advertisement of any type of meeting held. He added that the Chumuckla side of the Allentown VFD has only one (1) firefighter and three (3) trucks. He indicated that it would be very difficult for that department to conform to the 2 in/2 out policy.

Ron Scott, Bagdad, East Milton, FL

Mr. Scott is attending because he is very concerned with the audits.

It is Mr. Scott's belief that the fire departments have always been the red-headed step child, a necessary evil so to speak. He believes with the growth in Santa Rosa County this is bound to change. He would like this committee to be more than an advisory committee and be authorized to do more about the situations at hand. These are not just audit problems...they are very serious audit problems.

Mr. Scott provided examples of errant activities made by members of the boards of these departments and stated that board members sometimes do not know what they are doing.

He believes that more than a letter should be issued; he believes that this committee should ask the commissioners for greater authority; would like to see more action able to be taken by this committee.

He stated that this committee may want to include a recommendation that someone be made responsible for "digging."

Mr. Scott is willing to help bring all of these issues to the attention of the BOCC.

Mr. Scott also suggested that there is a fire type of Games Day that is usually scheduled and is held at PJC. It may be an excellent recruitment tool for recruiting throughout the county.

Meeting adjourned at 4:00 PM

Next meeting is Wednesday, January 25, 2006 at 2:00 PM